

into what these tests mean and how they might be beneficial will be slowed down, thus affecting the quality of health care for all Americans.

Lastly, our bill enhances access and choice of health insurance coverage in a number of ways which we will debate on the floor, areas that increase access to and affordability of health care of several areas, that include provisions which I am very excited about, and that is to allow the self-employed individuals, for the first time, to fully conduct their health care expenses. It only makes sense. We have really been punishing self-employed individuals, not giving them the same tax treatment that somebody has if they are working for a large company. It doesn't make sense. What we want to do is level that playing field and allow these self-employed individuals to fully deduct their health care expenses, just like people who work for large companies. It addresses access, because it means that these self-employed individuals are more likely to go out and enter the insurance market.

Our bill provides greater flexibility to employees who use the so-called flexible spending accounts to pay for health care. Our bill gives individuals the opportunity to have control over the health care decisions and costs through medical savings accounts. Medical savings accounts allow a patient to access the physician of their choice and to choose the medical treatment that they want if they choose that option.

As you can tell, our bill contains a lot. The reason that I wanted this afternoon to outline our bill is to make sure that our colleagues spend the next several days looking very carefully at the differences between the two bills that are before us, because the approach is very, very different. Both bills are well intended. I will say that I am very hopeful that we can pass a bill, a strong Bill of Rights. But that Bill of Rights needs to include a right to quality health care for all Americans. Our approach is very, very different. The intentions, I believe, of both bills are the same.

I am hopeful that we can engage in this debate without too much in the way of rhetoric. There is a lot of rhetoric that has been thrown on the floor here and in press conferences, but I hope we can come back and say this is an important issue. It is not one, really, to play politics with. It is not one to defer to another Congress or to filibuster or to make a part of the next elections. It is the sort of issues that we, as trustees to the American people, have an obligation to address and to address in this Congress.

Our Patients' Bill of Rights offers all Americans quality improvement based on the foundation of strong science. Our Patients' Bill of Rights offers all Americans patient protection, to access the care they need from the doctor they choose. Our Patient Bill of Rights offers all Americans trust in that doc-

tor-patient relationship, that central point through which I believe quality needs to be defined and health care delivered. We reinstate that trust. Our Patient's Bill of Rights offers all Americans access to more affordable health insurance coverage. Our bill does represent a forward-looking approach to provide for continuous improvement in health care quality, and it meets our goal of assuring that the doctor and the patient define quality—not HMOs, not bureaucrats, not trial attorneys, and not the U.S. Congress.

Mr. GORTON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

#### VETO OF COVERDELL LEGISLATION AND RELEASE OF HOUSE EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS REPORT

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, our self-proclaimed "Education President" has just seen fit to veto the most significant bipartisan education legislation passed by the 105th Congress—the Education Savings and School Excellence Act. As many Americans know, this legislation's main feature is to allow families to establish education savings accounts in which parents can invest \$2,000 a year and allow that money to grow tax free. Parents can use the money to pay for school expenses including tutoring, computers, school fees and private school tuition.

Why has the President seen fit to veto this legislation? Well, he has received a great deal of pressure from those who believe that we should not increase the control parents have over the education of their children.

In addition to providing tax-free education savings accounts for families, this legislation includes provisions that would: authorize a literacy program to improve the reading skills of America's youth; allow Federal funding for education reform projects that provide same gender schools and classrooms; allow States to make awards to public schools that demonstrate a high level of academic achievement; and allow states to test teachers and provide merit pay programs.

With the recent news that 60 percent of prospective teachers in Massachusetts taking a basic certification test were unable to pass, it is unfortunate that the President's veto will not allow States like Massachusetts to help current and prospective teachers reach their full potential, as well as reward those who perform in a superior manner. I signed a letter to the President along with 42 other senators asking that he sign the education savings account legislation and pointing out this very feature. Unfortunately, our plea fell on deaf ears.

Mr. President, I have worked diligently to fashion, over the past year a return to our parents, teachers, principals, superintendents and school

board members control over the education of their children. The Federal Government has too much influence and misuses too many resources that would be better spent in classrooms across America.

As a member of the Senate Budget Committee Education Task Force, I found that no one in the Federal Government even knows exactly how many education programs are overseen by the Federal Government. Although the Department of Education annually publishes a "Digest of Education Statistics," the most recent version of which is over 500 pages in length, there is no mention of how many education programs are administered by Federal agencies.

I have, however, heard testimony from the General Accounting Office about the duplication of Federal education programs. In January of this year Dr. Carlotta Joyner of the GAO appeared before the Senate Budget Committee Education Task Force and presented us with a graphic that highlights the web of Federal education programs in only three areas of education: at-risk and delinquent youth, early childhood programs, and teacher training programs. Dr. Joyner explained to us that 15 Federal departments and agencies administer 127 at-risk and delinquent youth programs, 11 Federal departments and agencies administer more than 90 early childhood programs, and 9 Federal departments and agencies administer 86 teacher training programs.

It is no wonder that more and more, States and local school districts are suffocated by a tidal wave of papers, forms and programs, each of which no doubt began with good intentions. The net result of this tidal wave, however, is precisely what makes it difficult to set priorities in each of the states and school districts across the country to determine that which will best serve their students.

As I have stated previously, the only reason I can discern that the President would veto this legislation is that he believes that schools will be improved through more control from Washington, D.C. Unlike the President, however, I believe our best hope for improving the education of our children is to put the American people in charge of their local schools.

I also believe it is appropriate at this time to give my colleagues in the Senate some good news on the education front. Last Friday, the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations adopted a report entitled "Education at a Crossroads: What Works and What's Wasted in Education Today" by a vote of 5-2. This report is a result of two-and-a-half years of work by that subcommittee and the dedication of its chairman, Congressman HOEKSTRA. The report is more than 70 pages long and I will not touch on all the issues it discusses, but I do want to point out some of the conclusions the subcommittee reached.

The report's conclusion states in part:

... the central theme of what we learned is that the federal government cannot consistently and effectively replicate success stories throughout the nation in the form of federal programs. Instead, federal education dollars should support effective State and local initiatives, ensuring that neither impedes local innovation and control, nor diverts dollars from the classroom through burdensome regulations and overhead.

The report goes on to give specific steps for Congress to take to improve education in America. The report advocates increasing the ability of States and local communities to waive federal education regulations, reducing the tax burden on families, passing tax-free education savings account legislation, improving federal support for charter schools, and otherwise encouraging more parental choice in education.

I have long been an advocate of many of the suggestions outlined in this report. I hope that my colleagues in the Senate will take the time to review the report Congressman HOEKSTRA's subcommittee has prepared and consider where they stand on these issues. It is long past time for both parties in Congress to stop simply giving lip service to the idea of local control of education, and to put our money where our mouths are.

Finally, I want to remind my colleagues that although I have introduced and passed twice in the last year an amendment that would allow States and local school districts increased control over the education of their children. Because of the insistence of Democrats in the Senate, the President, and even some Members of my own party this legislation has not yet survived a conference committee. Although I have not yet been successful in passing this legislation into law to give States and local communities the relief they deserve and need to improve education in America, I will again in the near future propose legislation that moves us toward this goal. Whether through block grants or some other means, I am committed to the belief that real education reform will not take place through "... guidance from above ...", but from parents and educators in communities across this land as they are empowered to direct the education of their children.

Mr. President, I note also present on the floor is Senator FRIST, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee task force on education, whose work is of equal importance to that of Congressman HOEKSTRA's and whose report I also commend to the Members of this body. He is our great expert on health care, but he is also a major leader in education reform in the U.S. Senate, and we all owe him a great debt of gratitude.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday,

July 23, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,537,084,024,142.92 (Five trillion, five hundred thirty-seven billion, eighty-four million, twenty-four thousand, one hundred forty-two dollars and ninety-two cents).

One year ago, July 23, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,367,623,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred sixty-seven billion, six hundred twenty-three million).

Five years ago, July 23, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,342,543,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred forty-two billion, five hundred forty-three million).

Twenty-five years ago, July 23, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$455,892,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-five billion, eight hundred ninety-two million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,081,192,024,142.92 (Five trillion, eighty-one billion, one hundred ninety-two million, twenty-four thousand, one hundred forty-two dollars and ninety-two cents) during the past 25 years.

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-6165. A communication from the Associate Managing Director for Performance Evaluation and Records Management, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule regarding measures to expedite resolution of certain common carrier formal complaint proceedings (Docket 98-154) received on July 22, 1998; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-6166. A communication from the Associate Managing Director for Performance Evaluation and Records Management, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Pauls Valley, Ratliff City, and Sulphur, Oklahoma, Abilene, Bowie, Highland Village, Mt. Pleasant and Overton, Texas)" (Docket 97-84) received on July 22, 1998; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-6167. A communication from the Administrator of the Energy Information Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's annual report for 1997; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-6168. A communication from the Chairman of the Appraisal Subcommittee, Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Subcommittee's annual report; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-6169. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting, notice of military retirements; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-6170. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, transmitting, pursuant to law, certification that full-up live-fire test and evaluation of the Department of the Navy's CH-60 Fleet Combat Support Helicopter would be unreasonably expensive and impractical; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-6171. A communication from the Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Limes and Avocados Grown in Florida; Relaxation of Container Dimension, Weight, and Marking Requirements" (Docket FV98-911-2) received on July 22, 1998; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6172. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Importation of Tomatoes from France, Morocco and Western Sahara, Chile, and Spain" (Docket 97-016-2) received on July 22, 1998; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6173. A communication from the Administrator of the Rural Housing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program" (RIN0575-AC14) received on July 22, 1998; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6174. A communication from the Secretary of Agriculture, transmitting, a draft of proposed legislation entitled "The State Meat and Poultry Inspection Assistance Act"; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-6175. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-383 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6176. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-384 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6177. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-385 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6178. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-386 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6179. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-393 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6180. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-398 adopted by the Council on June 2, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6181. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-402 adopted by the Council on June 16, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6182. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-404 adopted by the Council on June 16, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-6183. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, copies of D.C. Act 12-405 adopted by the Council on June 16, 1998; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.